



CITY-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

115 4th Street South, Great Falls, MT 59401 • 406-454-6950

NEWS RELEASE

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Update & Guidance on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Montana

Great Falls, MT — Earlier today, Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) was informed by Maryland officials of a Montana resident visiting Maryland who tested presumptive positive for coronavirus disease (COVID-19). **"Since the case was announced earlier today, public health officials have been working nonstop to learn more about this case and can now confirm the patient did not have coronavirus while she was in Montana,"** Governor Bullock said. **"We will continue to monitor the patient in Maryland and remain committed to preparing for coronavirus to reach Montana."** Please visit <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt> for the most up-to-date information from DPHHS.

The Cascade City-County Health Department (CCHD) is working closely with community partners—including Benefis Health System, Great Falls Clinic, the City of Great Falls, Great Falls Public Schools, Emergency Medical Services, and other agencies—to prepare in the event that COVID-19 comes to our area. Though "there are currently zero reported cases of COVID-19 in Montana" (DPHHS), CCHD encourages residents to take the simple precautions that should always be taken to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. This is particularly important considering that Cascade County is currently experiencing extensive flu activity.

- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick—and always send sick employees and students home.
- Cough/sneeze into your elbow or tissue (then throw the tissue away) & teach kids to do the same.
- Clean & disinfect frequently touched surfaces & objects using a normal household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask:
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is



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also possible that a person could get COVID-19 by touching a contaminated surface/object, then touching their nose, mouth, or eyes.

Public health officials are still learning about COVID-19 and how it affects people. Some who become ill have mild symptoms, while others have more severe or even life-threatening illness. Symptoms include fever, cough, and trouble breathing, and can appear anywhere from two to 14 days after exposure. If Cascade County residents have these symptoms, they should call a medical professional & discuss their symptoms before visiting the clinic in person, minimizing community exposure to illness. Health professionals will work with CCHD to determine whether the sick individual needs to be tested for COVID-19 or whether they may have another respiratory illness.

Currently, Cascade County residents remain at low risk of becoming infected unless they have recently traveled to areas with community transmission of the virus or have come in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. Your risk for this virus depends on travel history and exposure, *not* on race, ethnicity, or culture. The biggest risk is travel to affected areas (e.g. China, Japan, Italy, Iran, South Korea, etc.) and we urge all travelers to check the CDC's website for [updated guidance before traveling](#).

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